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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 165743

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 596 - JUNE 29, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY MORE CLEAR THAT THE JUNE 13 "IHIDIN MASSACRE," IN WHICH TONY FRANJIYAH WAS MURDERED, HAS SERIOUSLY UPSET THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE. THAT LEBANON-THE CHRISTIAN SECTOR AT LEAST--IS ENTERING A PERIOD OF REPRISALS AND GREATER TURBULENCE IS CERTAIN. IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS COULD TURN THE PRESENT SITUATION TO HIS BENEFIT, WERE HE WILLING TO ACT DECISIVELY.

2. TWO WEEKS AFTER TONY FRANJIYAH'S ASSASSINATION, TENSION REMAINS HIGH IN NORTHERN LEBANON, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO MAJOR VIOLENCE. THE ELDER FRANJIYAH HAS SET A JUNE 30 DEADLINE FOR THE DEPARTURE OF ALL PHALANGE PARTY MEMBERS FROM THE NORTH. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT THE PHALANGE HAS DECIDED TO SUBMIT TO FRANJIYAH'S THREATS AND DISCONTINUE ITS ORGANIZATIONAL AND RECRUITING ACTIVITIES

IN THE NORTH. LEBANESE OPINION DIFFERS AS TO WHETHER THE
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PHALANGE REFUSAL TO PULL OUT BY THE DEADLINE WILL TRIGGER FRANJIYAH'S RETRIBUTION AGAINST THE PHALANGE, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVING THAT FRANJIYAH WILL TAKE HIS TIME.

3. FEUDAL TRADITIONS AND THE NATURE OF THE BLOW DEALT AGAINST HIS FAMILY OBLIGE FRANJIYAH TO STRIKE BACK AT A GEMAYEL OF THE SAME STATURE AND IN THE HEART OF PHALANGE-CONTROLLED TERRITORY. THEREFORE, FRANJIYAH MAY STEP UP ATTACKS ON PHALANGE ELEMENTS AND OFFICES IN THE NORTH AFTER THE DEADLINE, WHILE MAKING CAREFUL PREPARATIONS TO STRIKE LATER AT THE GEMAYELS THEMSELVES. THE SYRIAN PRESENCE, HOWEVER, MAKES A RETURN TO LARGE-SCALE FIGHTING UNLIKELY.

4. THESE EVENTS ARE SET AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE INTRICATE TAPESTRY OF LEBANESE AND INTRA-CHRISTIAN POLITICS. THE MOST SALIENT FACTOR HAS BEEN THE EXPANSION OF PHALANGE INFLUENCE SINCE THE CIVIL WAR. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, THE PHALANGE HAS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF MANY POST-WAR CHANGES IN LEBANON'S SOCIAL SYSTEM, INCLUDING THE WANING OF THE FEUDAL SYSTEM AND THE DISSOLUTION OF FEUDAL LOYALTIES AND A RISE IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM AMONG THE LOWER CLASSES, WHICH HAD EARLIER LEFT POLITICS TO THE WARLORDS, A TREND THE PHALANGE HAS EXPLOITED IN ORDER TO DRAW ADHERENTS FROM THESE CLASSES.

5. THE GROWING PERCEPTION IN LEBANON SEEMS TO BE THAT THE

PHALANGE, THROUGH ITS INCREASING POWER, HAS BECOME THE INDIGENOUS FORCE MOST TO BE RECKONED WITH IN LEBANON. THE PHALANGISTS, FOR THEIR PART, APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR TIME HAS COME. IN THIS CONTEXT, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY BEIRUT, SOME LEBANESE VIEW THE ATTACK ON FRANJIYAH AS THE OPENING BATTLE IN A PHALANGIST DRIVE, LED BY BESHIR GEMAYEL, TO TAKE CONTROL OF CHRISTIAN LEBANON AND THEN TO MOVE EITHER TO CONTROL OF ALL OF LEBANON OR TO PARTITION. PHALANGE LEADERS MAY WELL WELCOME A FIGHT WITH

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FRANJIYAH, SINCE THEY BELIEVE THEY WOULD WIN AND WOULD THUS BE ABLE TO DOMINATE THE CHRISTIAN AREAS.

6. THE ASSASSINATION OF TONY FRANJIYAH HAS IMPARTED A SENSE OF URGENCY TO THESE PERCEPTIONS AND HAS LED THE OTHER FACTIONS TO REASSESS THEIR SITUATION AND TO SEEK NEW ALLIANCES. AS EMBASSY BEIRUT OBSERVED, THE CHRISTIAN "LEBANESE FRONT," WHICH HAD BEEN SLOWLY COMING APART, IS NOW ALMOST IN RUINS. THE FRANJIYAHS ARE NOW SWORN ENEMIES OF THE PHALANGE, AND THE SHAMOUNISTS AND OTHER SMALLER

CHRISTIAN GROUPS MUST NOW BE GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR OWN POSITION. SHAMOUN RECENTLY VISITED FRANJIYAH TO PAY HIS CONDOLENCE, A GESTURE WHICH WILL BE WIDELY VIEWED AS LENDING SUPPORT TO THE LATTER. THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS THAT FRANJIYAH HAS BEGUN TO LOOK FOR ALLIANCES WITH NON-MARONITE GROUPS. SIMILARLY, THE MUSLIMS APPEAR TO FEAR THE EXPANSION OF PHALANGE POWER. KARAMI, A LEADING SUNNI MUSLIM WARLORD IN THE NORTH, HAS GIVEN HIS SUPPORT TO FRANJIYAH.

7. GIVEN THE STATE OF FLUX ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, SOME OBSERVERS HAVE SUGGESTED TO EMBASSY BEIRUT THAT, IN THE LONG RUN, THE CONFLICT IN THE CHRISTIAN CAMP COULD BE TURNED TO SARKIS' ADVANTAGE. IT GIVES HIM A CHANCE TO TAKE HARD, CONTROVERSIAL DECISIONS WITHOUT HAVING TO FACE THE OPPOSITION OF A UNITED CHRISTIAN FRONT. GIVEN SARKIS' DISINCLINATION TO ACT TOUGH, HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO PROFIT FROM THIS OPPORTUNITY.

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8. ISRAEL. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN HAVE TEMPORARILY PAPERED OVER THEIR DISPUTE,

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APPARENTLY AT THE STRONG URGING OF SOME COALITION PARTY LEADERS WHO FEAR AN OPEN BREAK MIGHT PRECIPITATE A CABINET CRISIS. THE ENMITY AND SHARP DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS BETWEEN BEGIN AND WEIZMAN OVER NEGOTIATING STRATEGY, HOWEVER, ARE

UNLIKELY TO REMAIN UNDER WRAPS FOR LONG. INDEED, WEIZMAN, ENCOURAGED BY HIS ABILITY TO WEATHER HIS LATEST CLASH WITH BEGIN, MAY PRESS HIS VIEWS MORE VIGOROUSLY WITHIN THE CABINET--ALTHOUGH HE MAY MASK HIS DIFFERENCES WITH BEGIN BY ATTACKING FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN.

9. WEIZMAN HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED WITH BEGIN'S AND DAYAN'S HANDLING OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT, AND HE FEARS THAT BOTH HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE OF REACHING AN ACCORD WITH SADAT. WEIZMAN'S FRUSTRATION FLARED LAST WEEK AFTER THE CABINET VOTED TO APPROVE BEGIN'S VAGUELY WORDED RESPONSE TO US QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK. HIS SHARP, INTEMPERATE CRITICISM OF BEGIN AND DAYAN WAS IMMEDIATELY REPLIED IN THE ISRAELI PRESS, PROVOKING A STORM IN SOME QUARTERS OF LIKUD AND A CALL FOR HIS RESIGNATION FROM MINISTER OF COMMERCE HURWITZ, A CLOSE SUPPORTER OF DAYAN.

10. TO MEND HIS FENCES WITHIN THE HERUT FACTION OF LIKUD, WEIZMAN REITERATED HIS SUPPORT FOR BEGIN'S WEST BANK AUTONOMY PLAN AT A MEETING THIS WEEK OF LIKUD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES ATTENDED BY THE PRIME MINISTER. HE EVEN PRAISED BEGIN WHILE FORCEFULLY DEFENDING HIS VIEW THAT A SEPARATE PEACE WITH EGYPT IS STILL POSSIBLE IF ISRAEL CAN DEVISE A STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK THAT WOULD GIVE SADAT A "FIG LEAF."

11. WEIZMAN APPARENTLY HAS SHREWDLY DECIDED TO MUTE HIS DIFFERENCES WITH BEGIN AND FOCUS HIS CRITICISM ON THE MORE VULNERABLE DAYAN, WHO LACKS AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL BASE AND IS SUSPECT IN THE EYES OF MANY HERUT HARD-LINERS. WEIZMAN'S EFFORTS TO REDUCE TENSIONS WITH BEGIN PROBABLY

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WERE ALSO DESIGNED TO WIN POINTS WITH OTHER COALITION LEADERS, ESPECIALLY THE LIBERALS AND THE LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY. THE NRP HAD WARNED BEGIN THAT IT MIGHT WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT IF A MOVE WERE MADE TO REMOVE WEIZMAN.

12. THE SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE UNCERTAIN STATE OF BEGIN'S HEALTH. DESPITE THE DENIALS OF HIS DOCTOR THAT HE IS SERIOUSLY ILL, BOTH COALITION AND LABOR PARTY LEADERS ARE ALREADY JOCKEYING FOR POSITION IN THE SUCCESSION SWEEPSTAKES. FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH HAS CAUTIOUSLY SOUGHT TO IMPROVE HIS PROSPECTS AND DAYAN'S FOLLOWERS ARE URGING HIM TO TAKE STEPS TO ESTABLISH A FORMAL POLITICAL BASE.

13. LABOR PARTY LEADER PERES, IN TURN, HOPES TO CAPITALIZE ON THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT TO REPRESENT HIS PARTY AS A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO BEGIN. PERES HAS BEEN

CLAIMING INCREASINGLY THAT LABOR WOULD HAVE LESS DIFFICULTY MAKING PEACE WITH SADAT AND COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE SERIOUS EROSION IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT THE LABOR PARTY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO WIN BACK A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTERS IT LOST IN THE LAST ELECTION. (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. PDRY.NATIONAL FRONT SECRETARY-GENERAL ABD AL-FATAH ISMAIL, AFTER ELIMINATING HIS ARCH-RIVAL, PRESIDENT SALIM RUBA'I ALI, APPEARS TO HAVE CONSOLIDATED HIS HOLD OVER THE PDRY GOVERNMENT. TWO DAYS AFTER ALI'S OVERTHROW, THE SITUATION IN PDRY HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL. RUMORS THAT ISMAIL HAD BEEN WOUNDED OR KILLED WERE PUT TO REST BY AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON ADEN RADIO ON JUNE 28 THAT ISMAIL HAD CHAIRED A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL
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FRONT AND A STATEMENT BY ISMAIL ANNOUNCING THE COMMITTEE'S DECISION TO DISMISS PRO-ALI MEMBERS FROM THE NATIONAL FRONT POLITBURO.

15. THE IMMEDIATE SAUDI REACTION TO EVENTS IN PDRY AND THE YAR WAS ONE OF ANGER, AND THE SAUDIS ARE NOW SEEKING SUPPORT TO OPPOSE THE ISMAIL REGIME. HAD THERE BEEN PROLONGED FIGHTING WITHIN PDRY AS A RESULT OF ALI'S OVERTHROW, THE SAUDIS, NORTH YEMENIS AND PERHAPS THE IRANIANS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO INTERVENE MILITARILY. BUT THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH ISMAIL CONSOLIDATED POWER HAS VIRTUALLY FORECLOSED THIS OPTION.

16. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, BOTH NORTH YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA ARE LOBBYING FOR A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING PDRY IN THE MEETING OF THE ARAB LEAGUE EXPECTED ON JULY 1. THE SAUDIS EXPECT OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR THEIR RESOLUTION.

17. MEANWHILE, IN A TASS COMMENTARY YESTERDAY, SOVIETS DENIED A KUWAITI PRESS REPORT ALLEGING THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN, EAST GERMAN, AND SOVIET TROOPS IN PDRY. LIKENING IT TO EARLIER REPORTS OF SOVIET, CUBAN, AND EAST GERMAN INVOLVEMENT IN ZAIRE, TASS TERMED THE ARTICLE "A FABRICATION FROM BEGINNING TO END. . .NO DOUBT DISSEMINATED BY QUARTERS WHICH WOULD LIKE TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THEIR OWN INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES." THIS IS THE USSR'S FIRST DIRECT COMMENTARY SINCE THE COUP ON THE SITUATION IN PDRY AND SEEMS DESIGNED TO DISTANCE MOSCOW AND ITS ALLIES FROM EVENTS THERE WITHOUT COMMENTING DIRECTLY ON THE OUTCOME OF THE COUP.
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18. KUWAIT-IRAQ. A KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY KUWAIT THAT HIS COUNTRY WAS PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF RECENT TALKS WITH IRAQ. HE BELIEVES THAT

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IRAQIS ARE MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO REVAMP THEIR RELATIONS WITH ALL GULF STATES, MORE AS PART OF A LONGER POLICY EVOLUTION THAN AS A RESULT OF A NEWLY PERCEIVED SOVIET THREAT IN KABUL OR ELSEWHERE. THE HORN OF AFRICA DILEMMA, WHICH HAS LED TO A CESSATION OF ITS ASSISTANCE TO PDRY, IS SEEN AS FURTHERING THE MODERATION IN CURRENT IRAQI BEHAVIOR. OUR EMBASSY COMMENTS THAT WHILE SOME INFORMATION ON IRAQI POLICY IN THE GULF MAY NOT SUPPORT THE THEORY OF BAGHDAD'S CHANGE OF SPOTS," THEY HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO CHALLENGE THE OFFICIAL'S ASSERTION THAT IRAQ HAS GENUINELY BEEN TRYING TO DEFUSE TENSION WITH KUWAIT. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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